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The Guided Life.

The Guided Life;

OR,

LIFE LIVED UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

BY THE REV.

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PREFACE.

THE following Meditations were given in substance some years since, as a Lenten Course of Instructions, at the Church of St. Mary Abbott, Kensington. Notes of these Instructions were taken at the time of their delivery by a friend of mine, who embodied them in the form in which they now appear. In this form they have been rather widely privately circulated, and, I am told, have been found helpful by many. The knowledge of this has led me to yield to the request to publish them. But I have thought it best to do so in the form in which they have appeared hitherto. So, although I have revised these Meditations before now publishing them, they are as they appear the composition of my friend.

My great desire is that these Meditations may be helpful in leading some to see how truly our Living Lord is the Director of His people, and to give themselves up to His immediate guidance. I know full well the value of spiritual direction by a true Pastor. But I am as certain that much

pastoral direction to-day is immoral and dangerous. No director can be the mind or will or conscience of another without bringing the directed under a tyranny which is as immoral as it is degrading. Nothing can set each Christian free from personal responsibility for his conduct. All moral decisions must be the act of the individual: they cannot be rightly made for him by any other, be he Priest or Layman. A true spiritual direction is educative. It leads the directed to follow the guidance of the Living Lord by a free and personal conformity with His known Will; it guides to true liberty. But not unfrequently direction, as used to-day, guides to a servile and unintelligent obedience to a fallible director (frequently one whose fallibility is very apparent), in which the surrender of mind and will and conscience is demanded and yielded. From such a tyranny may all God's children be set free, to find in the ever-present ministry of the Living Lord, by His in-dwelling Spirit, that true Direction which is at once wise and free.

GEORGE BODY.

The College, Durham,
July 26th, 1893.

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The Guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I.

THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"The Lord shall guide thee continually."—*Isa.* lviii. 11.

THE subject of these Meditations is to be the Spiritual Life; and we shall consider it under one main aspect, as a life lived under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—a life in which God's people are perpetually guided by the Living Jesus, through the ministry of His indwelling Spirit.

The course of our Meditations will be as follows. We will consider—

I. The general subject of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

II. The guidance of the Holy Spirit as He leads us along the way of Contrition.

III. The guidance of the Holy Spirit as He leads us along the way of Sanctity.

IV. The guidance of the Holy Spirit as He leads us along the way of Ministry.

V. The guidance of the Holy Spirit as He leads us along the way of Patience unto the haven where we would be.

Our first meditation therefore will deal with the subject generally. Christian life is specially characterised by this feature—it is a life in which the Christian is consciously guided by the Living Jesus. In very deed the promise given to God's people by Isaiah of old is fulfilled in the Christian Church; and as we live our lives in union with Jesus, we are called on to live them under the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. St. Paul, indeed, describes this as being the characteristic feature which distinguishes Christian life from all other phases of life: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." Others may look within for guidance; others may look around for guidance; the Christian man is he who looks *up* for guidance, and knows that he is to live his life under the continuous direction of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, through the inworking of the Holy Spirit.

This then is our first thought: the living Jesus in Heaven is the guide of His people in all the perplexities and dangers of daily life. We must not for one moment imagine that this belief in His guidance is transcendental. Every one who is living near to Christ will testify to its being true, for this condition of our life is simply a matter of conscious experience. We are as certain that He is leading us as the child that runs prattling by his mother's side is certain that she is guiding and leading him, whither he cares not and knows not—only his way is plain, for his little hand is ever firmly grasped by her hand, and he never dreams of troubling himself as to the road along which she is leading him. Jesus lives. We know this full well as a matter of abstract dogma; yet the longer I live and the more I have to deal with Christian people, the more convinced am I that the actual realisation of Jesus as a Living Saviour, a Living Prophet, Priest and King, is too often lacking even with many who are rightly numbered amongst the faithful people of God. Jesus lives. We

know where He lives. In His assumed humanity He has passed from this world into Heaven, and is seated on the throne of the Majesty on High. Yet seated there He is still in intimate union with His people on earth. Nay, more than this, the very condition of His passing into that intimate union was His personal withdrawal from earth to Heaven; for now He is near to His people with the nearness of spiritual union created, sustained and strengthened by the ministry of His indwelling Spirit. Jesus, from high Heaven, lays hold of each of His children by the personal embrace of the Spirit; He dwells in each by the personal indwelling of the Spirit; and, thus united to them and dwelling in them, He guides them step by step, by the inworking of the Blessed Spirit.

1. Jesus, then, is our Director. Notice how truly His direction supplies our need.

The first qualification which a wise director must possess is knowledge—a threefold knowledge. He who would direct me aright, must know clearly what it is that God wills me to

be, he must have a clear apprehension of the end of my life. All life rightly lived is a reaching forward to a predestined end, and therefore he who would lead me in the right path must have a perfect knowledge of God's eternal purpose for me. And this knowledge Jesus alone possesses. He, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, has forever shared in the counsels of the Divine Father, He has shared in the Father's thought for me. Therefore He, and He alone, can direct me, for He only knows perfectly what God wills me to be.

But, in the next place, he who would direct me aright must not only know the end for which I was created, he must know the nature of the one he guides. Unless he knows my inner being, how can he direct me? God's thought for each of us is an individual thought. Individuality is stamped upon every creation of God, and pre-eminently it is stamped on man. All our life, then, in time, and, most probably, in Paradise, is a period of education; we are being shaped here to take our destined position in eternity, to give expression

there to God's eternal thought for us. It is essential, therefore, that he who would direct me aright should understand what are the features of character that must be brought out if I am to become what God would have me to be; he must know me thoroughly who is to be my true director in life.

And, further, he who would direct me aright must have a continuous knowledge of the external circumstances of my life; he must know where I am day by day and moment by moment; he must know what influences are being brought to bear upon me in the environments of my life; he must be able to teach me, being what I am, so to adapt myself to those environments as to become what God would have me be. There must be this threefold knowledge in every true director; and since this only exists in One, He only can be the true guide of the people of God. Jesus alone knows perfectly God's thought for me; Jesus alone amongst those born of woman knows me—ah! better than I know myself; Jesus alone knows really, truly, the circum-

stances of my life, the details of my daily spiritual experience; and so of necessity Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the one true Director of the people of God.

2. Yet again he who would direct us rightly through life must not only have knowledge; he must have firmness. He has to deal not only with my ignorance, but with my fickleness, my impetuosity, my slothfulness and sluggishness of being; he has to hold me in, reining me back when I would rush on presumptuously, and urging me forward when through spiritual discouragement I tread the path of duty with slackened footsteps. Jesus Christ is firm; most tender, most patient, most constant, yet most firm. How clearly He pronounces His judgment upon our daily conduct, through the voice of His Spirit acting upon our conscience! How stern, yet how loving, are the reproofs with which He rebukes us when we have given our consent to sin! He will not lower for any of us the standard of Christian holiness. He will not allow us to rest satisfied with a life conformed to the

standard of a worldly morality; He is firm in righteousness as He guides His people along the way of life. He will not frighten us by His sternness, yet He is not weakly indulgent; He will not let us have our own way, He will have His way with His children; He will not spoil us, because of His great love for us.

3. We need sympathy also in our director; we need one who will feel with us as he guides us along the road which leads to eternal life. For of necessity this road is the *Via Crucis*, there is no other way which can bring us to the haven where we would be. We are a cross-bearing people, following in the footsteps of a cross-bearing Lord: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." And the cross *is* always the cross to us. We shrink back from it as Jesus Himself shrank back from His Cross in Gethsemane; we shrink from all that is involved in the cross, from the suffering of body, the perplexity of mind, the grief of heart, the conflict of will, the despair of spirit it involves. Yet all these we, each one in his

measure, must know if we are to walk along the road of life; and so we crave for some one to guide us who can understand us and sympathise with us. Sympathise, I say, not simply pity us. There are so many who are ready to give us pity, but how few are they who understand our suffering, who really enter into what we are feeling; and so whilst many give us pity, and we thank them, for it shows a kindliness of heart, it does not meet our need. We look around for some one who has drunk the cup of which we are drinking now, who has tasted the sorrow which we are enduring. Thus we turn our eyes from men, saying, "Miserable comforters are ye all," and we fix them upon Jesus; we put our hand in His and we let Him lead us where He wills, for we know and feel by daily experience that He who guides our every step is wise with the wisdom of sympathy. Such then is Jesus as our Director.

II. Notice in the next place *how* He directs us; it is by the ministry of the Indwelling Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit? You know

full well that He is the Third Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity. He is not merely a Divine Influence as so many seem to think. I know quite well that most Christians would assert that the Personality of the Holy Spirit is an accepted article of faith. Yet there are many who *practically* think of the Holy Ghost as simply an Influence coming forth from the Father and the Son. We can put this easily to the test. How often do you offer in your devotions direct adoration to the Holy Ghost? How often do you offer thanksgiving to the Holy Ghost? How often do you offer direct prayer to the Holy Ghost? To the Father and to the Son we offer worship, thanksgiving and prayer, because we realise their Divinity. Yes, but the Holy Ghost is as truly God, and as such is the object of our praise, thanksgiving and prayer equally with the Father and the Son. If then direct worship of the Holy Ghost is lacking from our devotions, is it not because the verity of His Divine Personality is not really laid hold on by us? The Holy Ghost then is a Person, the Third Person of the

Holy Trinity. Our God is not a solitary monad, He does not dwell alone in the isolation of an eternal solitude, in the monotony of an eternal silence, in the sterility of an eternal inactivity. Such is not the life of God as it is revealed to us. God is one, but the One God finds within Himself companionship, communion, and a sphere of activity commensurate with the magnificence of His own Infinite Being. For ever, by the Father is the Eternal Son begotten; for ever the Father and the Son are one in contact of mind; there is in Them oneness of thought; They are one in contact of heart, there is in Them oneness of desire; They are one in contact of will, there is in Them oneness of resolve. This wonderful spiritual contact of the Father and the Son (which is called by theologians "The Kiss of God") is not, cannot be, resultless. Of necessity there must be through it an eternal result within the limits of the Divine Being. And this is the eternal result; for ever from the Father and the Son, one with the Father and the Son,

flows forth the Eternal Spirit, the term and complement of the Trinity, and the eternal bond of union within the Trinity.

Such is the Holy Ghost; and it is He who dwells in the people of God. The Spirit of God is always the Spirit of Unity. Just as within the limits of the Divine Trinity it is the Holy Ghost who is the bond of union, so when God would take any of His creatures into union with Himself, it is in the power of the Spirit that this union is created. Thus when human nature was to be taken into union with the Personality of the Divine Son, how was the Incarnation brought about? The Holy Ghost overshadowed Mary, and the result was that indissoluble marriage by which the Divine and human were for ever wedded in the Personality of the Eternal Son. So again when God wills through the God-Man Christ Jesus to bring man into union with Himself as His elect, it is through the Holy Spirit that His object is accomplished. The Lord Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, stretches out as it were His Blessed Hand and lays hold of

the elect, one by one, in the Sacrament of Regeneration. As human nature is united to the Divine Personality of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, so each of the elect is united to the God-Man Christ Jesus, in the power of the same Spirit, through the great gift of Regeneration—that gift which Christ has merited for us by His death upon the Cross, which He claims for us by His ceaseless intercession in Heaven, and which He wills to give us through the covenanted channel of the great primary Sacrament of Holy Baptism. It is through this Sacred Rite that we share in the distinguishing gift of Christianity the indwelling Presence of the Holy Ghost.

God the Holy Ghost is in us. Why? To lead us as our indwelling guide. "Let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness." Such was the ancient cry, and that cry has been answered in an arresting manner in the Church of God. Our Lord distinctly tells us that this is the characteristic privilege of Christianity in very memorable words. Speaking to His Apostles on the night

of His Betrayal, He uses these words about the Holy Ghost: "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." The Spirit of God has always been with the people of God, He has ever been guiding them; but now He leads the elect under different conditions than He did of old. Of old He was *with* them, guiding them from without, but now He is *in* us, guiding us from within; and this is the essential condition of all true Christian liberty, that we are taught by an indwelling Teacher and guided by an indwelling Guide.

How does He guide us? Not by sensible visions and signs. So many are waiting for a vision, or a revelation, whilst all the time the Lord is guiding them by His guiding influence within, if they would but recognise it. He guides us first by His action on our minds; He instils into them holy thoughts; He reveals truth after truth, each of which calls for moral correspondence. If we only listen for His Voice it is marvellous with what clearness we can hear Him calling. Even if we look back only over one year we

shall remember distinct and definite messages which have come to us—in church perhaps, or when we were going about our daily duties—messages which called us to take some onward step of repentance and advance. And each one of such holy thoughts is the direct creation of the Living Jesus in the power of His Spirit; it sounds through the deepest depths of our being as a very call from God Himself. But this is not all. He acts not only on our minds, but on our hearts. At times there comes over us a feeling of intense regret that we have not more truly corresponded to God's grace, and our souls melt with sorrow as we fall at God's feet in deep and true contrition. Or again our hearts swell with aspirations towards higher heights of holiness, or towards greater sacrifice in service. Whence come these holy aspirations? Again they are the creation, the immediate creation of the living Jesus. He, within our hearts, is guiding us by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Once more. Not only does He act upon our mind and heart, He acts upon our will. There

are times when the whole inner being consciously thrills at the touch of Divine Grace; when it is almost impossible for us not to respond; when at least it is not difficult to take the onward step, to sink down into deeper depths of humility, or to rise to higher ventures of generous self-sacrifice. This is the result of the power of Jesus acting upon us by the Holy Ghost and impelling us to take a forward step along the road of life.

Yet again. He guides us by acting upon our conscience. It is a certain proof of progress in the Christian life, if our conscience speaks to us more clearly than it once spoke. If we have given ourselves up into the Hands of Jesus to be directed by Him, He is ever prompt to tell us when we are going wrong in the slightest degree, by creating a restlessness in the conscience, or even less than restlessness, a consciousness within us that we are not living fully as He wills. This is not always even a stern rebuke, frequently it is only, as it were, a tender whisper of disappointment. But He is ever acting on our conscience, and

acting upon it increasingly. Pointing out the wrong way we are to turn from, and guiding us along the right, His Hand holds ours as He whispers to us in sweet tones of most loving condescension, "Thou art My beloved child, in thee I am well pleased." Thus by His continual guidance of our mind and heart, and will and conscience, we are led, moment by moment, through life by the Living, Loving Jesus, in the power of the Indwelling Spirit.

In conclusion let me give you two or three practical rules to help you in living this guided life. Ever remember that we are not taken up and carried along the road we have to tread, far less are we driven along it like slaves; no, we are "led," and they who are led must follow Him who leads them. There are three things therefore about which we must be very careful:

1. We must obey our Lord's calls *promptly*. How many blessings we have missed in the past from not responding promptly to the call of God. A revelation came to us of some

possible beauty of life, it came as a clear call of God, and we felt not only its attractive power but its moral obligation; yet we tampered with it, and then it was withdrawn. The light of God seems so strange to us at times; it may be that it has streamed down upon some great dogma, revealing it to us in startling clearness for a time, with the moral consequences it involves, and then when we have tried to teach that truth to others, or to recall it to ourselves, it has vanished, and we ask sadly, Why? It is because that fresh light was vouchsafed as a call, but we lost it by not responding to it promptly. It would be inconsistent with the dignity of the Incarnate God to brook with our delays, and therefore He passes on and the opportunity is lost. I do not say that it is lost never to return; often it is not so, for He comes back again and again in His infinite love and re-utters the call, but it is unwise, it is irreverent to keep Him waiting for our response. It is here that so many of us fail; we do not heed His call. Conscience would warn us if we would but

pause and listen to its voice, but we do not do so; we go forth and lose the Divine Voice in the chaos of the world, or the distractions of family life, or in the activity of Christian work. Yet all the while it is His Voice that is speaking to us continually. But it is always a still, small Voice, and so we do not heed it, it does not irresistibly fix our attention, it is left unresponded to, and the light goes away, peace is lost, liberty is forfeited, joy is absent from us because we do not respond promptly to Christ's call.

2. Our Lord's calls must be fully responded to. If I were asked what it is that makes so many Christians' lives unsatisfactory, I should answer, it is half conversion. Surrender of will is the essence of conversion; the call of God comes to us to take Jesus as our King, to pass from disobedience to obedience. True it is that we must take Him as our Saviour before we can take Him as our King, but to accept Him as our Saviour and not as our King is the very essence of an imperfect conversion. And yet this is the

spiritual position of so many people; they have been shown their sin, they have sorrowed for sin's consequences, they have even, it may be, sorrowed for sin itself, they have prayed for mercy and have found pardon and peace with God; then they have been told that their conversion is a thing accomplished and that their future Christian course is to be one long basking beneath the rays of continual sunshine, ceaselessly singing the songs of the redeemed. Yet it is not so of necessity, for what is conversion? Not that which issues in the miserably weak inconsistent Christianity that we see in the present day; no, conversion in its essence is the giving ourselves up to Jesus that He may reign over us as our King; it is surrender of will to Christ. *Whole* surrender, not *partial*. Do not let us commit the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, do not let us hold back part of the price; when Christ calls let us respond fully.

3. When Christ calls, we must respond *perseveringly*. The vocations of God are never recalled: "the callings of God are without

repentance." Every call that comes from Him is an abiding call: true it is that one call is added to another as we go forward in the spiritual life, but God never recalls His vocations, once uttered they must be responded to perseveringly. There should be no fickleness in our spiritual life; God does not call us, for instance, to give up some sin or some harmful self-indulgence in Lent that we may resume it at Easter; that is not the way to climb to higher heights in spiritual experience. Every Lent as it comes should lead us to take an upward step, which when once taken should be maintained. We must follow perseveringly when God calls us by the Voice of His Spirit, and so only shall we go forward in the spiritual life.

What a life is this! What words can tell of its peace? A life lived under the watchful eye of Jesus, under the shadow of the ceaseless intercession of those outstretched Hands, under the sympathy of His loving Heart; above all, a life lived under the guidance of His Blessed Spirit, and that not intermittently in life's crises, but continually, a life in which

I am guided by the Living Lord day by day and moment by moment. What room is there for anxiety in such a life? We have committed ourselves wholly to Him; He is the One who knows the goal I am called upon to reach, He knows the path which leads to that goal, He knows the weakness and the needs of His poor child as He leads me along that path to my predestined end. He will not fail me; if I fall, He will raise me; if I wander, He will bring me back; if I am weak, He will strengthen me; aye, if I am weary of effort, He will have pity on me and give me quiet resting-places along the road of life suited to my weakness and my need. He is the Saviour, "who carries the lambs in His bosom and gently leads those that are with young." "The Lord shall guide them continually."

If Christian life is—to go forth and live our daily life in the world, in the home, in the closet, under the guidance of the Living Jesus, through the power of His Spirit, a guidance which embraces the whole nature, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical, is this

guided life a reality to you? If this be an attainable ideal, how can you hope to avoid the making of your life one huge mistake, one heart-breaking failure, if you persist in trying to live it alone without this direction of God? Surely man's ignorance, man's weakness, man's helplessness must make such an attempt to be folly. Give yourself up to the Living Jesus, let Him possess you in the power of His Spirit, and henceforth, like a little child, go out and live the guided life under the direction of that Enthroned Saviour who is ever guiding you by the ministry of His Blessed Spirit.

The Way of Contrition.

II.

THE WAY OF CONTRITION.

"In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."—*Jeremiah* l. 4, 5.

THE subject of our Meditations is the spiritual life, considered as a life lived under the guidance of the Indwelling Spirit of the Living God. In the last instruction we considered this subject by way of introduction, and we saw that we only truly rise to the true apprehension of Christian life when we behold the Living Jesus guiding His people step by step, through His Indwelling and Inworking Spirit, as they walk along the road of life. We recognised also that, at every stage of our pilgrimage, it was our duty to follow the leading of the Spirit promptly, fully and perseveringly.

I have to bring before you now, the first of those paths along which God's people are led, and to ask you to consider the Holy Spirit's guidance, as He leads us along the way of Contrition.

Our spiritual life as a life of contrition is typified for us in the return of the children of Israel to Jerusalem from their long exile in Babylon. It is of this return that the words of the Prophet Jeremiah were spoken which are placed at the head of this Meditation ; and in them it is particularly pointed out that, led by the Spirit of the Living God, the Israelites trod their homeward path in the spirit of contrition. So it must be with us ; we are coming from the Babylon of this world, with our faces turned Zionwards, travelling to the Holy Jerusalem ; we too must walk as they walked of old, we must live our lives in the spirit of contrition, and of us also it must be said, as it was of them, they went "going and weeping."

Of necessity, contrition must be the first stage of spiritual life. For what is contrition ?

Let us be clear on this point. The Bible definition of contrition is, sorrow, κατὰ θεόν, sorrow that is in union with God. Contrition is no passing paroxysm, it is a state of abiding spiritual sorrow; we are taken by the Spirit of God into union with God, and therefore the Spirit is ever acting upon our mind and heart and will. In Christ the light of the Spirit streams in upon our mind, and we see sin in some measure as God sees it. The Spirit also acts upon our heart, so that the heart of the faithful Christian beats throb by throb responsive to the Heart of God; hence we not only see sin as God sees it, but we feel about sin to some extent as God feels about it. Nay, more than this; the Spirit of God, illuminating the mind and inspiring right affection to the heart, blends our will with the Will of God; there is oneness of will between the penitent, face to face with his sin, and the righteous will of God; and so wherever there is union with God there must be contrition; for whoever is united to God must condemn sin as God condemns it, he must regret sin as God regrets it,

and he must rise in warfare against sin as God is in ceaseless warfare with it. Is it not clear therefore that, in a sinful world and amongst a sin-stricken people, there can be no such thing as union with God without contrition?

This is the great truth which the Prophet Isaiah dwells upon, when he tells us that God has two dwelling-places: "Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." For, in its essence, contrition is the virtue that unites the sinner's will with the Will of God. Sin, in its essence, is the variance of the will of the creature from the known Will of the Creator. As a necessary consequence, therefore, sin involves spiritual death. When God says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," He does not speak as a judge arraigning us at the bar of justice for the breaking of the law, pronouncing upon us the sentence of death inflicted from without

as a punishment, as a just, though not necessary, result of sin. No, when God says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," He is uttering not a threat but a warning. Notice the distinction. If I put on a bottle of poison the direction that it is not to be tasted lest the taster die, I utter not a threat, I give a necessary caution. And when God tells us that death is the result of sin, He is but making known to us the necessary consequence of sin. For what is sin? We have already said that it is the withdrawal of the will of the creature from obedience to the known Will of the Creator. What does that mean? Of necessity, the suspension of the union between the Creator and the creature. What is the necessary result? As spiritual life consists in union with God, and as sin suspends that union, sin, of necessity, involves death. And equally of necessity, contrition involves the recovery of life. For what is contrition? Does not the contrite one throw down at the foot of the Cross his weapons of rebellion? Does he not come to the Throne of Grace with

the penitent and trembling confession that lays at its foot a submitted will? Wheresoever there is contrition there must be a will surrendered to God; and where there is this surrendered will, there is—there must be—recovered life. Hence for you and for me, as we are members of a sinful race, and are ourselves sin-stricken, there is no way back to God but the way of contrition.

Let us see, in the next place, how the Spirit leads us along this tear-stained path of penitence.

It is generally recognised that there are two distinct stages in the contrite life; I venture myself to think that there are three such stages, but we cannot touch upon the third (the contrition of the faithful in Paradise) in the course of this Meditation. The first is the stage of initial contrition; it is that stage into which we pass by spiritual awakening, and out of which we pass when, through the tasting of the Divine forgiveness, we enter into the peace of God. In other words, initial contrition is the contrition which precedes and

leads up to a true conversion. We know how the Spirit of God leads those who are living either in thoughtlessness, or in gross rebellion, back to the feet of Jesus Christ. He comes and draws near to them as He did to Isaiah of old. What a marvellous story is that of Isaiah's conversion as he has related it to us in one of the earlier chapters of his prophecies!

Isaiah, as he here describes himself, was evidently a young man sent out into life richly dowered; he possesses great personal gifts, powers of intellect, powers of imagination, powers of enthusiasm, powers of will; his lot is cast in the highest circles of the day; he is the kinsman and trusted friend of the reigning king of Judah, he is evidently also a man popular in society and is welcomed on every hand; above all, he is a man of great personal ambition, whose longing it is to reach the highest heights of power, and to have much to do with swaying the destinies of his people. All at once a great sorrow comes to him; the kinsman whom he loves so dearly, and on whom to a large extent his political prospects

depend, is stricken with a sad disease, which involved ecclesiastical and social excommunication, and must issue at length in a painful death. Then it is that Isaiah has the vision that was the crisis of his life. He sees the Temple of the Living God, and the heavenly courtiers assembled in that Temple; he sees them gathered round One "high and lifted up," seated on a throne, the true King of kings and Lord of lords, and sees in Him the Sovereign whom it is indeed a joy to serve; and in these worshipping spirits he realises what the creature's life should be. So the scales fall from his eyes, and in one moment, in the light of this revelation of the Ideal Life, he sees how sinful his life has been. He falls at God's feet with this confession, "Woe is me, for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." And as he thus confesses his sin, God ministers to him in His love; an angel comes with a burning coal from off the altar whereby the unclean

lips are purged, the message of Divine forgiveness falls upon his listening ear and carries peace to his troubled conscience, and Isaiah rises to live his life henceforth as a loyal servant of Heaven's glorious King.

So it happens continually, for—thanks be to God—this work of gracious power is repeated again and again, in many a great city, and among circles like to those in which Isaiah dwelt. God is continually, in the power of His Spirit, awakening men to a sense of their sin, bringing them in spiritual sorrow to His feet to cry for mercy, teaching them to unburden themselves of their iniquity in confession, and then drawing nigh to them with the message of forgiving love.

But this is a transitory stage. Does contrition then come to an end after the message of forgiveness is heard and believed in? Some say that it is so, that contrition ceases to exist as we pass into the peace of realised forgiveness; therefore they will not use our Prayer-book, they object to our Litany, they say that the words of the Confession in our Communion

Office are altogether untrue to the facts of Christian experience. Let us pause then for a moment to look at this question. Is not contrition *before* forgiveness a very imperfect contrition indeed? For what is true contrition? Sorrow for sin in itself, not for sin's consequences; κατὰ θεόν, sorrow in union with God, in which the penitent shares the feeling of God towards sin. Now in initial contrition there must be, as its prevailing element, a sorrow not so much for sin, as for its consequences. Of necessity, this must be so, for when we are awakened to the fact of our sin, when we realise for the first time how tenacious is the grip with which it holds us, when we look back upon a past which we cannot efface, and forward to a future which we cannot avoid, then anxiety for the consequences of sin must arise, and in every age of the Church down to the day of our Lord's coming this will be the cry of the awakened sinner, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

What does God do? He draws near to the sinner with His Divine forgiveness, and so

takes away once and for all the fear of the consequences of sin, teaching the penitent to say with St. Augustine, "That I have committed these sins I confess, but that Thou hast forgiven these mine iniquities, my God, I know it." There is no "if" or "but" as to the fact of forgiveness; as real as is the knowledge of sin and sorrow for sin, so real is the knowledge of forgiveness. But does contrition cease when we have been forgiven? Is the sinner set free from the guilt of sin in order that he may go forth and forget it? No, this cannot be the case, unless he is lacking in all true generosity. Surely the effect of forgiveness must be this; he can now see his sin with the eyes of his spirit as God sees it, he can dare to look at it as he could not do before, and now all selfish elements being taken out of his sorrow, his heart is peacefully broken as he shares the Divine regret for sin. In every generous heart this will be the resolve: Because God forgives me so freely, I will never forgive myself; so that instead of forgiveness drying up the sorrow of

contrition, it has upon it a double effect—it takes out of it every low and selfish element, and it intensifies our sorrow instead of making it cease to be. We never know an unselfish contrition until, as contrite, we receive forgiveness from the Saviour's lips, and the joy of His reconciling kiss brings home to us our ingratitude and His love.

So the Spirit leads us along the path of contrition, and we see that our spiritual life as lived under the guidance of the Living Jesus must be always a life of sustained contrition, a contrition not only deepened and intensified, but continuous. And this for many reasons.

In the first place, our sin is continuous. I am well aware that there are good people who would tell us, that to speak in this way is to prove that one has never grasped the full liberty of Christian life; and no doubt it is easy to maintain the assertion that sinlessness is possible, if only we are first allowed to define what we mean by sinlessness. The answer to the question, "Are we now living sinless lives?" depends upon the answer to a previous

question, "What do we mean by sin?" I know there are many definitions given us of sin, but we will consider only one, the definition, which is given by St. Paul. Sin, he tells us, is "coming short of the glory of God." According to the derivation of the word, sin is missing the mark of life, failing, that is, to realise the true ideal of life. What is that true ideal as it is set before us by our Lord? The perfection of God—"Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If God is my Father, then God's perfection is the standard by which I am to measure myself. If this is assented to, argument is at an end, for there is no one who seriously maintains that he is conformed, even in his measure, to the absolute perfection of God. But people often prefer to take the lower definition of sin, as the breaking of the law; and though even on this lower level of life I do not think they can ever truly claim for themselves perfect obedience—"In many things we offend all"—at any rate it is only when they forget the higher definition given

to us by the Holy Spirit, that it is possible for them to go forth and talk of their sinlessness, which indeed is a perfect myth. Let us keep to the old Bible words, "If any man says that he has no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him." God calls upon all men to free themselves from this self delusion of attained sinlessness here and this for many reasons, chiefest of all, because it would take from them the beauty of an abiding contrition. Whatever may be the case with other people, we, at all events, are fully aware that, day by day, we are consciously coming short of the ideal that Christ has set before us. Indeed one would not envy the religious experience of the man who could say that he had realised the ideal of his life, for it must be a very poor ideal that can be attained here and now. We at least see only too clearly that we are continually falling short of the standard which has been given to us, and in this continual knowledge of our shortcomings what can we do but sink at God's feet in continual contrition, and with our *Te Deums* of thanksgiving for God's

goodness, blend our *Misereres* of penitential sorrow for our sin?

But there is another reason why our life must of necessity be a life of abiding contrition. It is quite true that when we are taken into union with God there is an absolute separation between us and all penal consequences of sin; but for all that we have not done with our sin, it still remains as a fact with which we must reckon. We carry into our new life a great deal of what we contracted in our evil past. We carry into it a sinful knowledge from which we cannot shake ourselves free; or a horrible diseased imagination which we too often find by experience is a most subtle danger to our spiritual life; we carry into it habits of carelessness or of sloth, of undisciplined speech or of uncontrolled temper, habits which are only very slowly conquered in our advancing years. In other words, we carry a marred being into the new life, and, as the light streams down upon us, it shows us how our own inner spiritual nature has been disfigured by sin, so that we know that we are

not to Jesus the thing of joy which we might have been, had we served Him in those past years of disobedience; we know that if we would now give joy to our Lord, we must weep over all that mars our beauty, that spoils and weakens our inner character.

One other thought—though I will not dwell upon it, for it is too full of pain—but when we pass into union with God we do not cancel the influence which thoughtlessly or deliberately we used against Christ in our past days of disobedience. There are those whom we might have won for God and for righteousness, and they were left unwon; nay more, there may have been those to whom we have spoken tempting solicitations to evil, or on whose character we have stamped some sinful mark. *We* have been converted through God's mercy, but they are wandering still, each of them becoming centres of evil influence to others, who in their turn become fresh centres for harm. So the circles of evil widen and multiply, until the thought of misused influence is sufficient to crush one to the very earth.

What can we do, even whilst we rejoice in the love of God which has drawn us back to His feet, but go on our way sorrowing with an ever-deepening sorrow, for as we know more and more of God's love the evil of our misused influence is more and more revealed to us. Surely of us, as of Israel of old, it should be true that we "go upon our way weeping."

And here we must pause to meet a difficulty. Some one may possibly say, What an unattractive picture of the spiritual life is here set before us; we are to go on our way always condemning ourselves for the past, always mourning and weeping because of our present failures, so that our path is wet with our tears. Surely this is a very unattractive prospect. Yet it is not so in reality. What is the life we all desire? A life, perhaps we answer, in which we shall continually go on our way in the full enjoyment of Christian liberty and joy and peace. Yes, but how do we think this abiding joy and peace is to be ours? Do we answer, that it is through our Lord continually assuring us of His free forgiveness, of our

present acceptance, and of His present personal love, whilst the vision of future glory grows brighter and brighter before us in each advancing year? We are quite right in so thinking, for it is thus indeed that our Lord will deal with us. But why should it be a difficulty to us that, though our life is to be thus a life of liberty and joy and peace, we are yet to go on our way weeping over life's failures, recognising life's sins, knowing bitterest heart-regret as we contemplate these failures and these sins? Believe me, we can know comparatively little of true joy or peace unless we have this abiding sorrow of contrition, for to be self-condemned is to be Christ-comforted. We cannot know the tender love of Him who wipes the tears from the penitent's cheek, unless we shed that tear. "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;" this is one of the beautiful paradoxes of Christian experience. In it we not only taste sorrow co-existing with joy, but the measure of our contrition is the measure of our joy. If we think of it, this will become perfectly clear. For to whom

will Christ come nearest? Whom will He comfort most? Whom will He cheer with His tenderest compassion? Surely those whose cheeks are stained with penitent tears; it is they who will touch His Heart and move Him to stretch out His consoling Hand, it is they who will ever be the most comforted, who give themselves up the most entirely to the sorrow of an abiding contrition. This is the reason of the small measure of peace and joy we find in so many believers; they are not living lives of generous contrition. Only live as penitents should live, and you will find that your peace and joy flow as a mighty river.

Again, it is contrition that makes the burden of our daily life easy and light to bear. When we give ourselves up into God's Hands, we know that He has to correct us; it is only in the discipline of life that the evil of our past can be worked out of us, it is only in the discipline of life that God can educate us in the true sense of the word, drawing out the undeveloped capacities of our character into harmonious and perfect expression. We have

to be educated in the school of the Cross, and that school is not only one from which we naturally shrink back, but it is also a deep perplexity to us. There is probably no single Christian man or woman to whom God's dealings have not been at times intensely perplexing, and who has not questioned over and over again His justice, His wisdom and His love. But contrition comes in and teaches us that whatever we personally suffer is just; like that penitent thief of old, the contrite man will always own that he suffers the due reward of his deeds. We can see that many of the difficulties of our present life are the necessary result of our own sins in the past; and in our daily discipline we recognise the justice of God. More than that, we recognise the wisdom of God; for as the remembrance of our past sins keeps clear before us the hidden sources of evil in our own being, we are able to see how wisely His discipline is directed to correct the evil within. And surely we see His love. True contrition is the fruit of forgiveness. And,

as forgiven, we can trust the love of God because we have tasted it in His pardoning mercy and in His accepting grace; so as we walk with our Lord along the road of life in a spirit of contrition, we find by daily experience that the path of discipline is the path of peace.

Once more. There comes to the penitent the knowledge that as he is giving himself up to the working of contrition, he is giving joy to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. We have said it before, but it cannot be repeated too often, to be to Him a thing of joy, is the fulfilment of life's highest end. We cannot lift to Him a countenance beautiful with the beauty of innocence, that joy is not for you or for me, but we can lift to Him a countenance beautiful with the beauty of penitence. Art itself has recognised that there is a beauty in the Magdalene at the foot of the Cross only second to the beauty of the Blessed Virgin; and it is in our power, as we give ourselves up in the abandonment of a loving faith to the in-working of His implanted con-

trition, thus to give Him joy. Always live in the remembrance of that beautiful mystical text in the Song of Solomon: "Oh! my dove that art in the clefts of the rock,"—these words then are addressed to those who are, thank God, in the clefts of the Rock, who are, that is, in Jesus Crucified, who know what it is to be living in the consciousness of His salvation, in the joy of His true and blessed peace, —"oh! my dove that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice,"—what is the dove's voice? Is it not the voice of mourning? Was not Israel to be like the doves of the valley, every man mourning for his iniquity?—"for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely." Dear are the *Misereres* of the forgiven penitent to the Heart of the Lord, winsome in the sight of Jesus is the tear-stained cheek of one sorrowing for sin; and this of all attractions is *the* attraction to the contrite man, that as he walks along the path of contrition, he is a joy to Jesus Christ.

"All Solomon's sea of brass and world of stone
Is not so dear to Thee as one good groan.
And truly brass and stone are earthly things,
Tombs for the dead, not temples fit for Thee;
But groans are quick and full of wings,
And all their motions upward be:
And ever as they mount they seem to sing;
The note is sad, but music for the King."

The Way of Sanctity.

III.

THE WAY OF SANCTITY

"Elect, through sanctification of the Spirit."—1 *Peter* i. 2.

THE Christian life, as we have been considering it in our two last Meditations, is first, speaking generally, a life of obedience to the guidance of the Spirit of God, Who abides in every one who is in living union with Christ Jesus. Secondly, it is, as a life of obedience to the Spirit's guiding, a life of abiding and ever deepening contrition, because the Spirit of God leads us, as sinners, along that path of repentance which is the only road by which the sinner can return to his Father's home. We have seen moreover that as the Spirit leads God's people along the way of repentance by the virtue of an abiding contrition, He is also leading them onward in a path of peace, for they who are contrite are ever

cheered by the knowledge of Divine forgiveness; and they who weep for their sin find ever, in that weeping, increasing emancipation from its power.

In other words, the path of repentance, to those who are led along it by the Spirit, is, in very deed, the path of justification. What do we mean by justification? It is that gracious work which must be done by God in men because of sin. It is the ungodly who need to be justified. If there were no sin there would be no such thing as justification. Justification is emancipation; it is that action of God upon the spirit whereby He sets men free from the consequence of sin; immediately and entirely from the guilt of sin, by the Divine forgiveness, slowly but surely from the *power* of sin, by Divine renewal. This is a definition of justification which is not always clearly understood, we will therefore repeat it. Justification is the emancipating work of grace, and it includes deliverance from sin's power as well as deliverance from sin's guilt. Renewal, as well as

forgiveness, forms a part of God's justifying work.

But justification is not the only work of the Spirit of God, nor is it even the highest form of the work of grace, in the elect of God. Justification is after all but a preparatory stage towards a higher and a nobler one. Christian life is more truly a life of sanctification than it is a life of justification. The life of sanctification may be defined as Christian life realised in its positive aspect. What then is meant by this positive aspect of Christian life?

First, Christian life is a life of continual ascension towards God. In every portion of his being, the Christian man should be ever ascending towards God; in his mind, in his heart, in his will, in his imagination, even in his outward body, in its transfigured beauty, if he is true to his calling he is being lifted up towards God and returning with his whole being into Him. Again, it is not simply a life of ascending towards God, it is a life of repose in God. They who are sanctified are united

to God; their mind is one with God's Mind, they share God's thoughts; their heart is one with God's Heart, they share God's love; their will is one with God's Will, they co-operate with Him in His great works. Thus by union of mind and heart and will with God, the life of sanctification is a life of continuous repose in God; not the repose of unconscious sleep, but of conscious oneness. And once more, sanctification is more than a returning to God and resting in God, it is a life of increasing conformity to the Beauty of God. For they who rest in God, gaze with eyes opened by grace upon His fair Beauty; and the vision of the Beauty of God is always a transfiguring, transforming and assimilating vision, so that they who thus return to God and repose in God are increasingly conformed to the loveliness of God. Thus they become things of joy to God, and attain the very highest heights of the life of consecration or sanctification. This then is the positive aspect of our life—we are justified in order that we may be sanctified; we are set free from sin in order

that we may be consecrated positively to the Living God. This is the true conception of Regenerate Life; and to enable us to realise it, God is ever, in His own great love, giving to us the Spirit of sanctification.

There are three distinct phases in the Spirit's work as seen in the life of sanctification—

Firstly, He is the consecrating Spirit.

Secondly, He is the creative Spirit.

Thirdly, He is the enabling Spirit.

1. He is the consecrating or separating Spirit. The primary idea of consecration is separation to God's service, and it is applied not only to persons, but to places, to days, and to things. One day out of every seven in the old Jewish Calendar, as in the Church of Jesus, is set apart from the rest of the week to be in a special sense God's day, to be observed by obedience to a special law of separation. Places and things were consecrated of old—the Temple, the Altar, the Holy of Holies were set apart for God; that is, these special places were solemnly separated

from all secular uses and dedicated to the service of the Most High. Persons also were separated; as, for instance, the Levites, and within the tribe of Levi the family of Aaron, were set apart for the service of the Sanctuary. We must always keep a firm hold of this thought, for it is of great practical value. Sanctification then is that act of God whereby He separates any portion of time, any place, any thing, any person to be specially dedicated to Himself. It is in this sense that the Psalmist prays, "Preserve Thou my soul, for I am holy." He did not mean that he had attained to stainless purity of character; what he saw was the grandeur and the danger of his position as one who was consecrated to God. It was indeed a glorious fact for him to know that he was separated unto God by His eternal Will with a separation made effectual by His vocation in time, and sealed by His holy anointing; but then the measure of the greatness of his high calling was the measure of his danger, for sin in him would be of the nature of sacrilege. So he cried in

conscious realisation of his peril, "Preserve Thou my soul, for I am holy." "O God, Thou hast consecrated me to Thyself, preserve this consecrated personality from all sacrilegious defilement of sin."

So it is still; God sanctifies and separates us to Himself. This separation begins in the deep depths of a timeless Eternity in the election of God: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn thee." This eternal election of God is made manifest in a definite way and by a special act in time. We know well what that act is. From our earliest infancy we have been taught to express our belief thus: "I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God." Just as by the act of Consecration churches are set apart for holy purposes; just as, by the act of Confirmation, lay people are set apart for holy service; just as, in an ascending scale, deacons, priests, and bishops are set apart by the act of Ordination for special offices and ministries; so we, each and all of us, were separated to

God, and in this sense made holy, by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost in the Sacrament of Regeneration. There, first of all, the Holy Spirit separates men unto God; and of this separation we have a standing sign in the mark of our Master's Cross, stamped outwardly and visibly upon our brow in Baptism.

2. The Spirit not only separates us unto God, He creates in us a sanctified character. *We* are not days, or buildings, or things, we are men and women, so that if we are to live the consecrated life, we must not only be the subjects of a separating and consecrating act, we must be dowered with special powers, enabling us, in character and conduct, to correspond with this act of consecration. So the Spirit within us is the creative Spirit, creating in us a sanctified character. He does this in three ways. First of all, the Spirit gives us life. Just as by natural birth we become partakers of natural life by being linked by the chain of generation reaching through the ages to the first Adam, so by the

new birth "of water and of the Spirit" we become partakers of the Divine Life; and because we are then united supernaturally to Him who is the Second Adam, there is communicated to us by God, through Christ, in the power of the Spirit, that gift which we call grace—for grace is nothing else but this, the energy of Divine Life communicated in measure to each of the elect of God.

But He not only gives to us grace, He gives us also virtues. The theological definition of a virtue is as follows—"*Virtus est quâ recte vita vivitur.*" A virtue is that through which I am enabled to live my life aright. Virtues are to the spiritual life what senses are to the natural life. We could hardly conceive of a person in the position of one having a frame instinct with life, but without senses, no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no hands wherewith to touch; if such an one existed in this crowded bustling world, his life would be a very transitory one, but a very painful one while it lasted, for he would be continually coming into collision with things with which collision

would be unpleasant and dangerous. In other words, it is of absolute necessity that we should not only have a frame instinct with physical energy, but that we should also have certain senses which will enable us to live our sentient life obedient to the laws of natural existence. It is precisely the same in the spiritual life, and therefore God gives those who are brought into union with Christ, three virtues, Faith, Hope, and Love.

Faith is a virtue which is communicated to the intellect, and dowers it with supernatural capacities, so that by it we can hear and understand and apprehend the words of God. We cannot do this by our natural power of intellect, for "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God." Many people are surprised because confessedly clever persons will assert that supernatural truth is to them foolishness. But, as a matter of fact, from the first days of Christianity onwards, the Church has always maintained that the keenest natural intellect confronted with supernatural truth will withdraw from it in

unbelief. Not that faith is irrational; it is plainly an act of reason. In its exercise a distinct thought is put before the intellect and is embraced by what is purely an act of reason; but it is reason acting, not in the natural, but in the supernatural sphere, for faith lays hold on the intellect and dowers it with power to understand the words of God.

And just as the Spirit gives faith to the intellect so He gives Hope to the will, for as faith supernaturally enables the mind, so hope enables the will. The will is the source of action within us, and action is a reaching forth to the attainment of a desired end. Its force is ever equivalent to the measure of its expectation of attaining this desired end; that is, the measure of our strength and of our perseverance in action must be always the measure of our hope. For what is hope? It is the virtue of expectation; in the failure of to-day it lives in the confidence of to-morrow's success; it is the long-sighted virtue, which is always living in the future and not in the present. Since then we are called upon to live for the prize of

that eternal to-morrow, we shall be well furnished for life's journey if we tread life's path in the strength of a will that has been made strong through hope.

The Spirit, moreover, not only gives faith to the intellect and hope to the will, He gives Love to the heart. It is love after all that shapes every life and guides all conduct. We may know of some action that it is right to do it, we may have a strong conviction that we could do it if we would but try, yet in spite of this we may still remain passive, because the will is only stirred into action by the desire of the heart. There are always three stages in every action of grace. First, there is the apprehension of the intellect, then there is the delight of the heart, and then there is the conformity of will. But the will, speaking generally, does not respond to the convictions of the intellect, until that which the intellect grasps, the heart delights in and desires. So God gives to the heart the grace of love. Consider what Love is. It is the Love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, it is

the reflection of the love of God in the purified hearts of His people. He opens their eyes to see and their hearts to delight in His love as it is revealed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Each one is taught to say for himself, I know that God loves me, and as I gaze upon God's love and refuse to look within to see whether I love Him or not, gratitude fills my heart in the knowledge that He does love me, and that gratitude dares to call itself love. "We love Him because He first loved us." Thus the Christian loves God with a love responsive to His own. Thus, through the Spirit, those virtues are infused into us which enable us to live our lives aright, and we are dowered with the gifts of faith for the intellect, hope for the will, and with the reflected love of God to fill our hearts.

3. Let us notice, in the last place, yet another action of the Holy Spirit in His sanctifying work in the Elect. True it is that through the Holy Spirit, we receive life and power to live aright, yet, if the three infused virtues are to be brought into active

play, we must experience in another way the power of the Holy Ghost. It is He who draws out the music of that sanctified nature which He has created. Every regenerate soul is like a beautiful organ; it is the embodied thought of the great Master Builder, Christ Himself, expressed through the creative power of the Spirit. What capabilities of harmonious sound lie latent in every organ; yet if music is to be drawn out of it, it can only be through these two conditions — the notes must be touched by a musician's hand, and the wind must make them vocal. So it is with us. Jesus, in the power of His Spirit, is for ever touching each individual soul with the purpose of drawing out of him the music, the unequalled music, of a saintly character and a saintly life; and as He touches each, He makes His touch effectual, by the continued action on the soul of the grace of the Holy Ghost acting on our inner spirits as the Wind of God. So, through His power, there rises to God from the sanctified nature the beautiful music of sanctity.

In conclusion let me give you some practical thoughts with reference to the right living of the life of sanctification.

Its first condition is this. We must believe that Christ has chosen us to be His own, not simply to save us from our sins and rescue us from Hell and bring us at last to Heaven, to stand, as it were, on the very outskirts of that vast multitude which circles round the Throne; we must believe that Christ has chosen us to make us beautiful with the beauty of sanctity, that He has chosen us to fill us with His grace, that in the power of His Spirit we may be enabled to give our whole being, thoughts, desires, resolves, imaginations back to God; we must believe that God has made us, that Christ has embraced us, and that the Spirit of God dwells within us to enable us at last to be saints. Unless we believe this we can never rise to those heights of Christian life to which Christ has called us. Surely if Christ has chosen us, and placed us in His Church under the continuous action of His Holy Spirit in order to make us holy, He can do it. He

has merited for us the grace which is necessary for this. And surely He did not come into the world that the issues of His mission should be an eternal failure. If it be true that Christ has called His people to be saints, Christ can and will make them saints, if only they will believe in His power and give themselves up into His Hands. This is the first condition of attaining sanctity.

The second condition is this. If we seek to know more and more of the power of the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, we must diligently use the means by which the Holy Spirit is wont to carry on His sanctifying work. I will only mention two. First, the diligent study of the Word of God. "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth." There is no doubt that every word of God has a sanctifying power on those who hear it and yield themselves to it. And we must not narrow this term—every word of God—nor limit it to the word of God in the Sacred Scriptures. Thank God! its meaning is wider than that. All nature is a Divine utterance; history is a Divine utterance; and if we are

wise, we shall not only heed God's word in the Bible, but we shall also study the story of man and the story of nature, and everywhere we shall hear God's voice and come in contact with God's truth. Yet, truth finds its chiefest utterance in that unique book which we call the Holy Scriptures, and it is through a diligent study of it, that we are to seek for the sanctifying grace of the Spirit. This is an experience common to all who read God's Word; and we have to ask ourselves therefore if we have really ever *studied* Holy Writ. What does such study involve? First, prayer. Having opened our Bible, we should kneel down and ask God to open the meaning of it to us; then we should fix our minds firmly on it, and study it, word by word, and in its general meaning and context. As we do so, a flash of light will come to us, revealing to us what we have never seen before, and with that flash of light which illuminates the intellect with Divine truth, we shall be conscious of a real glow of joy, kindling the affections of our hearts and

enlightening our minds. More than that, this revelation touches the conscience; it shows us inconsistencies to be corrected, or glorious heights of holiness, as yet unthought of, to be reached forth to and attained. And yet again it attracts the will to correspondence with the truth revealed, and enables it to respond to this attraction by the gift of Grace. After a time of such study as this, the whole being thrills under the consciously experienced power of the sanctifying Spirit. And with the study of God's Word we must also be regular in prayer, private and public; and, chiefest of all, in attendance on that sacred rite which is the greatest of all the sanctifying agencies of the Spirit in the Church, the Holy Eucharist of our Lord's Body and Blood. Only whilst we must be diligent, faithful, earnest and regular in the study of the Bible, in prayer, and in receiving the Blessed Sacrament, we must use all these, not as ends, but as means—in God's Word listening for God's Voice; in prayer seeking God's Face; in the Eucharist seeking the communication of

Christ's own Life. So shall we know continually and increasingly what it is to live in the conscious experience of sanctifying grace.

And in all tarry thou the Lord's leisure. Believing that Christ can make you holy, using diligently those means which His love and wisdom have created to be the channels of His grace, be patient. Give yourself up into His hands in the school of life; Christ knows what God means you to be, although you do not. We are so continually making our own ideal of our life, and then, when we cannot realise it, we become discouraged and think that our religion is unreal. But it is not so. All this is to teach us that we are not to have ideals of our own. *He* knows to what type of beauty He wills me in eternity to be conformed; He knows exactly what training I need and what blessings I require; He can tell when and where to use the chisel of His discipline, and how best to take away anything which might mar my beauty in the everlasting future which He has purposed for me. Even when we are perplexed by His

discipline we must give ourselves up to Him and hear Him saying to us, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." To sum up everything, abandonment to Christ, whose longing desire it is to make us holy through the discipline of life, is the chief condition of attaining to holiness.

"O keep thy conscience sensitive,
No inward token miss,
And go where grace entices thee,
Perfection lies in this.

"Be loyal to thine unseen Guide,
Love Him as He loves thee;
Time and obedience are enough,
And thou a saint shalt be."

Christ wants you to be quite holy, quite beautiful, a saint; and you want to be quite holy, quite beautiful, a saint. Who has put this longing into your heart but He in whose Heart it has been a predestined thought for you from eternity?

"Time and obedience are enough,
And *thou* a saint shalt be."

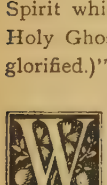
Not *here* and *now*. Our ideals are never realised here and now. But *there* and *then*.

The Way of Ministry.

IV.

THE WAY OF MINISTRY.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"—*John* vii. 37-39.



E are considering Christian life as a life lived under the guidance of the Living Jesus, as He leads His people onwards, step by step, through His indwelling Spirit. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit is, as we have seen, the characteristic privilege of the Christian covenant, of that covenant into which we have been admitted by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. "Repent and be baptised for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." We have seen also that Christ, by His indwelling Spirit, guides His elect, one by one, with a personal guiding along the path which He calls each

one to tread. First, by the virtue of contrition He leads them as penitents along that tear-stained path which leads from the Babylon of this fallen world to Jerusalem the Golden above. Secondly, He leads them along the way of holiness by grace and by the virtues which He communicates to the soul, so that the Christian who is living under the guidance of the Spirit of God goes on, from strength to strength, in ever advancing sanctity.

But, in the third place, Christ leads His people along the path of holy service, and dowers them, by the Holy Spirit, with the gift of spiritual influence: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters." As from beneath the rock on which the Temple was built there flowed forth the waters of Siloah's stream which turned the desert into a garden of the Lord, so, out of every believer, flows gracious influence, by which those who are naturally barren and dead become fruitful and living. The secret of influence will therefore be the subject of this instruction; and

we will begin by the consideration of two or three preliminary thoughts as to what underlies the universal craving for influence.

Influence is a splendid gift, for he who possesses it is called to live his life under conditions in which two great longings of our nature find their satisfaction. It is the desire of every one to perpetuate himself; and the same craving that leads to the perpetuating of the race in the natural sphere, makes its presence manifest in the mental and spiritual sphere. Every man who has strong convictions desires to find others to whom he can communicate those convictions; every one whose own life is shaped by the effort to attain a splendid ideal, is anxious to raise up kindred souls who shall share with him the love of that ideal, and shall reach forward to its attainment after he himself has passed away. Two great principles underlie this desire. In the first place, no one can really know the fulness of life and joy in solitude; the full enjoyment both of intellectual knowledge and of spiritual perceptions is practically untasted

until we can share them with others. And, secondly, we are anxious that the thoughts which fill our minds, and the ideals which captivate our imagination and enkindle our own hearts and mould our wills, should find an abiding expression in this world in which we live. But then our own life is so transitory, our convictions are so slowly developed and shaped into their true proportions, that ere the thought within us has reached its rounded proportions, we find that our powers of thinking are beginning to be dimmed, and that our time on earth is drawing rapidly to a close. Yet we long that the thoughts which live in our minds should live on in the minds of others; we would that the convictions to which we give utterance to-day should find utterance on earth after we have passed into the blissful silence of the land of Paradise. But how can this be? Only if we can raise up a family of spiritual sons and daughters; only if we can put our thoughts into minds younger, fresher, brighter than our own; only if we can train the lips of others to give true

utterance to our own thoughts and convictions; only thus can we be intellectually and spiritually perpetuated after we have in bodily presence passed away. And this intense longing to perpetuate ourselves finds its realisation in the power of holy influence.

But there is another craving in the human heart which is also satisfied by the exercise of spiritual influence. It is quite certain that there is a false pride, but it is also as certain that there is such a thing as a true pride, a true ambition. We must remember that no natural instinct is in its essence sinful; sin is always the unregulated gratification of a desire which is good in itself. Pride is inordinate self-esteem. The sin of pride does not lie in a true appreciation of our own dignity or power, but in the fact that this appreciation is unrestrained, that it is undue and presumptuous. But how are we to deal with this craving? Are we to destroy it? We dare not do so, if we desire to have noble men and noble women doing noble deeds. A true ambition, a true nobility of desire, under-

lies nobility of action. Instead of condemning ambition, Christ Himself teaches us that He uses this powerful craving in the carrying out of His own great ends, for this is the joyous song of the ransomed in the sacred presence of their Lord: "Thou hast made us kings and priests, and we reign on the earth." "Have dominion," was the command wherewith God sent forth man into the world on the day of creation; and every man who is really true to the dignity of his manhood desires to go out and reign amongst his fellow-men. But how must he desire to reign? Surely it must be with the reign of influence, for there is no kingship which is so absolute as that. External kingship only touches external conduct; the power of the despot may succeed in bending the craven knee before the idol which the heart abhors; it may wring from the craven lip the confession that the intellect rejects; but influence enters within and rules over man in the deepest depths of his being. By influence I reign over another's mind, I shape his thought; by influence I reign over

another's heart, I direct his affections; by influence I reign over another's will, and in so doing I mould his character, I guide his life, I affect even his eternal future. What kingship can be compared with this? And its crowning glory lies in the fact that whereas the despots of earth reign by the degradation of those whom they control, he who reigns by true influence degrades none, for he reigns over free men and not over slaves, and there is nothing unworthy of the dignity of manhood in free obedience yielded in response to conviction. This kingship, moreover, is no abnormal vocation to which an exceptional few belonging to the Catholic Church are called; every one of the ransomed is privileged to cry, "Thou hast made us kings and priests;" and of every believer it is true—not collectively only, but individually—"*Whosoever* believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Why is it that this kingship of influence is the privilege of Christian people? or, to put the same question into other words—why is it

that the secret of power for Christ, is to be found in union with Christ? That it is so, is stated clearly and distinctly by our Lord. This is the law; the measure of internal spiritual energy is the measure of external influence. In the extent in which we receive are we able to communicate; he that by faith receives the Holy Spirit into himself, "out of his belly shall flow rivers" of holy influence. Why is this so?

1. The first reason is this; when we are in union with Jesus Christ, there is kindled within the heart a passionate desire to exercise influence for Christ. This desire rests upon the fact that union with Christ is, in its essence, the union of love. "The love of Christ constraineth us," wrote St. Paul to his fellow-Christians in those bright days of the early Church which were so conspicuous for their evangelistic zeal. For love, of necessity, implies oneness of desire with the one loved. If we love some one very dearly, the desires of his heart are shared by us; and if we can minister to the cravings of that heart by the

bestowal of the gift for which he craves, our love would be evidently of little worth if it did not breathe itself out in giving joy to the loved one, by laying the desired gift at his feet. And Christ has one great desire; even now there is a hunger and a thirst within His Sacred Heart; it is the hunger and thirst of love. For whom does He thus thirst? We know the answer full well. His love must be as catholic as is the embrace of His redeeming death. Christ died for all because He loved all, and, if He loves all, He must hunger and thirst for all to yield themselves to His love. Now if we say that we love Him, that we are in union with Him, that we live looking to Him with the eye of faith, that we walk through life clasping His outstretched Hand with the grasp of hope, that we yield our wills to Him in the response of love, what must inevitably follow? He is hungering and thirsting for the conversion of those for whom He died, for the prayers of the contrite, for the tears of the repentant. But sinners are brought to contrition, through the ministry of Christian men

and Christian women, and hence that hunger can only be satisfied, that thirst can only be quenched, when Christ's people go out into the world to exercise holy influence for Him. Hence there must be always a passionate desire within those who are living in union with Christ to bring men, by their influence, to His feet, and thus to minister to the desire of His Sacred Heart.

2. Union with Christ is the condition of influence, not only because it supplies the motive for desiring influence, but because it puts us into a condition in which we can exercise it wisely and powerfully. Let us notice this in three ways. The first great secret of influence is sympathy. We are often inclined to wonder why it is that some people do not exercise a greater influence in the world ; when we converse with them it is always with profit ; we know that we have come into contact with minds that are in very close communion with God ; hence we expect them to be powerful instruments for good ; yet they are only found to be so in a

very limited degree. Or again we see strength of character and strength of will sanctified, and evidently given up in full sincerity of purpose to the Lord; we admire those who possess this gift, as they go through life treading its path with firmest footsteps, and apparently untouched and unharmed by all evil surroundings. Again we expect such people to be centres of influence, and find to our surprise that they are not so in any marked degree. And then perhaps we come across some one who *is* a power, who attracts the love of little children, to whom broken hearts instinctively turn in their moments of crushing sorrow, to whom, in the hour of awakening from sin, penitents will come in the consciousness that they will find a heart to understand them; and we ask ourselves, Where does that man's power lie? Not in his intellect, for he is certainly not an intellectual athlete; not in his strength of will or force of character, for he is very often lacking in strength and determination. In what then does his power consist? In the strength of his sympathy.

Sympathy is the power of putting ourselves into another person's position; it is that power by which we take upon our mind another's perplexities, by which we take upon our heart another's griefs, by which we take upon our conscience the burden of another's conviction of sin, until there comes almost a conscious identification between the minister, and the soul to whom he or she is ministering. Where then can we learn this sympathy? Only in the school of human experience. And the reason therefore why union with Christ is the essential condition for exercising Christian influence lies in the fact, that through this union alone, can we learn what they need who tread that path along which we ourselves have travelled over in our own spiritual experience. We learn to know the conditions of the conflict that others are facing, by having faced them ourselves; we gain the power to sympathise with the converted sinner in the darkness of his awakening, by having passed through that darkness ourselves; we learn to enter into the gladness of the rejoicing penitent

as he rejoices in the new-found peace of God, because we ourselves have tasted the joy of that sweet experience. Those who wish to be spiritually strong in influence, must go out in the strength of spiritual sympathy; and if we desire this grace of spiritual sympathy, we must have as its first condition, oneness of spiritual experience with those to whom we minister: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

There is another reason why union with Christ is the essential condition of spiritual influence. If sympathy is to be an abiding power, it must be supported by consistency of conduct. There are only too many who have sympathetic natures, and who *are* led, more or less, by the Divine grace, whose influence, whilst it is wide-spread, is only transitory. They are great powers for a season, but, as year by year goes on, the more they are known, the less their influence becomes. What is the reason of this? The sympathetic nature is frequently exposed to a very great danger; it

is beautifully tender, but it is often impulsive, and it is apt to lack moral vigour. In one who has the power of sympathy we think we have found an ideal man; we yield ourselves up to his influence and he re-shapes our lives. At length, as we watch him, inconsistency of character is seen, and this inconsistency is found to be not transitory, but permanent. Slowly but surely we become disillusionised; and the man fails to perpetuate his influence, because of his inconsistencies. This is surely the fatal secret of the only too common lack of permanent influence. The mistress of a household will say that she cannot think why she lacks power to lead her servants in the right way; she makes every provision she can for their spiritual welfare; she arranges the order of her house so as to give them opportunities for Communion, for attending Divine Service, joining Bible classes, and so on; she is very regular in the matter of family worship; she talks to them about their religious duties and the need of receiving the Holy Communion; and, notwithstanding all her pains, they

either do not care for God's house at all, or are only found there in obedience to her commands. What is the secret of the failure? Her own inconsistency very often—her inconsistency in trying to effect that which is absolutely impossible, in trying, that is, to combine the service of the world with the service of the Living God. Again, Christians lose their influence through their inconsistency of speech, through their permitted bad temper at home, through the manifold weaknesses which are manifested so continually, that we ourselves take them as a matter of course. But others see, through them, such a vast difference between what we are and what we say we desire them to be, that they decline to believe in us at all. It is just the same with the influence of father and mother. It is not the mother's teaching by itself which will form the child's character; it is the mother's life blended with her teaching, for children's lives are shaped by the influence of example much more than they are by instruction; and so is it everywhere. Thus one condition of

exercising permanent influence is consistency of conduct. But how can we, in our weakness, attain to consistency? I only know one secret of consistency, and that is union with Christ; whole surrender to Him; in the power of the Spirit to lead the listening life, attentive to His word; to live the obedient life responsive to His call; to live the contrite life, for ever giving ourselves to Him, in our daily inconsistency, to be forgiven and corrected by His wondrous love. For, let us mark it well, it is not *attained* consistency which is essential to influence. Any one who lives in close association with another—husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant—and sees one with a high ideal set before him, battling with infirmities, and living a life of continual regret before God for confessed failures, will be ready to own that inconsistency which is confessed and struggled against, does not forfeit the power of influence. The second condition of influence then is consistency; and if we would be consistent, we must be in Christ.

Yet once more, the secret of Christian influence depends on our recognition of the true Source of influence, on our understanding Who it is influences others. It is not we who do so, thank God for that! It is the Living Jesus who influences every one who is beneficially influenced by us; from Him comes all that wondrous energy which flows through us, and works such marvellous results in those with whom we are brought into contact. The third condition, therefore, of exercising influence is realised dependence on Christ; the continual going to Him and the consciously drawing from Him all the power of our influence; the giving ourselves to Him to go where He would have us exercise influence, the doing what He calls upon us to do in absolute simplicity. We must go forth in the spirit of dependence; to use the words of a living bishop, "No one is wise until he goes forth in the wisdom of realised ignorance, nor strong until he goes forth in the strength of realised weakness," for he who knows his ignorance will give himself to Christ to be taught, and he who knows his weakness

will give himself to Christ to be strengthened; and when Christ's wisdom and Christ's strength flow out through our ignorance and weakness, it is then that we are spiritually strong. But how can we have this power unless we are living in Christ, and are in conscious dependence on Him? This then is the secret of influence, to give ourselves up into the hands of Jesus to be possessed by Him in the power of His Spirit, to give ourselves to Him, not to become what we ourselves desire to be, but to be what He would have us be; to give ourselves to Him not to do what we like to do, but that He may, through us, do what He wills. For the one course will ever bring us into a position of crushing anxiety in our work, the other is a position of absolute and sustained peace in it.

These then are the three conditions under which we can exercise influence wisely and powerfully.

Let me, in conclusion, draw out some practical rules which follow on these considerations.

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cating side ; we cannot give out for God except in the measure we receive from God. I wish this was more clearly recognised, especially by the clergy, than it is. We are so frequently giving out and but seldom taking in, and therefore what we give out is too often weak and poor. It is perfectly clear that if we are to be the channels through which supernatural influence is to flow to men, we can only give out this influence according to the measure in which we ourselves are influenced. We must receive before we can give ; and the measure of our power of communicating must be the measure of our power of receiving. Do not expect to be able to give to others what you have never received yourself; be sure you will not exercise influence if there is a lack of study, of prayer, of meditation in your own life. Yes, to all who are active in Christian work, I would say, ever remember that there must be fidelity to the receptive side of life if you are to exercise any real abiding influence. How often do we hear men say that they have worked hard in their district, or their school, or their class, and yet

there is no result. Perhaps they have worked too hard. There are a multitude of Marthas in modern English life; but it were good for such if, at times, they would follow the example of the wiser Mary, and sit down quietly at Jesu's feet, and draw in from Him that power which cannot by any possibility be given out, before it is taken in.

3. As we go forth to exercise influence we must work in the spirit of faith. The promise is clear, and it is a personal and individual promise: "He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Or take again that beautiful assurance in the Old Testament, "He that now goeth on his way weeping and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy and bring his sheaves with him." "Doubtless." The word is graven with an iron pen upon the rock; it is the promise of the Living God. Do we believe that word "doubtless"? Then why are we discouraged? Is it because we cannot see results? But what have we to do with results? One sows (it may be our work only

to sow) and another reaps; but the joy of the sower and the reaper shall be a common joy hereafter, and they shall share a like wage. Let us go forth then to sow, let us scatter the seed and water it with our tears, let us seek the Divine benediction on our work in prayer, yet let us never work for results, but in obedience to Christ. No, our call is a higher call even than that; we are not to work for Christ, but to give ourselves to Christ that He may work through us. If we do this, can there be such a thing as failure? The answer lies in another question, Can God fail? "My word that goeth forth out of My mouth shall not return unto Me void." What shall it do? "It shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it." Let us bless God that this is the promise to the Christian worker. Only never forget that Christ can use none but little children. We all know how often children are the best messengers, for they are content to carry a message as it is entrusted to them, they will not try to re-state it in their own language and thus

perhaps spoil it. And so it must be with us. We can carry messages, we can carry gifts, and that is all that the Lord asks from us. And as in the simplicity of faith, we thus give ourselves up to Him for His work, we shall find that our influence has become mighty, and in the records of Eternity it will be seen that in us also was fulfilled God's blessed promise, "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." What will be the joy of that moment when, like Fra Angelico's guardian angel, we can lay our hand upon another's hand, and say at the Foot of God's Throne, "By Thy influence acting through me, this one is here: behold me and the child whom Thou hast given me!" May God grant to each of us that sweetest of joys for Jesus Christ's sake!

The Way of Patience.

V.

THE WAY OF PATIENCE.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God."—Revelation xiv. 12.

CHRISTIAN life is a life lived under the presence of the Living Jesus. We gather much of His close along the path of life, by His enduring Spirit. We have already noticed that our Lord leads us along a path which is at once the way of Communion, the way of Holiness, and the way of Victory; and it is a path which has this threefold aspect, because the way along which God's people are guided is always the path of the holy cross. We are continually warned by our Lord that there is but one road for us to travel, if we would be partakers of His glory hereafter, or be the present channels of His love and of His grace. "If any man will to be My disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Christian people

are the cross-bearing followers of a cross-bearing Lord; and it is from the Lord Himself that they must learn how to bear their cross according to God's will, how to tread the path of suffering in a right and proper spirit. For that which is true of Christ is true of His elect —it is only through the Eternal Spirit that we can correspond in any measure to the will of Him Who leads us to a life, where pain and sorrow and suffering are all-embracing features.

The path of sorrow that we tread has the three-fold aspect we have already considered, because all Christian life here below, is the way of the Cross. Jesus trod the way of the Cross, as the way of contrition, the Cross was to Him the way of perfection, and the Cross was the way of power.

1. Jesus trod the way of the Cross as the way of contrition. Our Lord did not *introduce* suffering or pain or sorrow into the world. We sometimes come across people who refuse to believe in Christianity, because of the presence of these perplexing phenomena in God's world. But to do this is surely very irra-

tional. Christianity did not create the present condition of things; and plainly no puzzling of our brains over the presence of pain, or sorrow, will remove these sad facts out of the world. They are there, and we cannot ignore them.

"Never morning wore to evening but *some* heart did break."

Christianity takes the world as it is; it does not bid us waste our time in vain strugglings against the inevitable facts of human life, but it comes to us as a great remedial scheme by which sorrow and suffering may become tolerable; nay, more than that, by which these natural ills of human life are transformed into sacraments of blessing. At any rate we, as Christians, are in a more favoured position than they who reject Christianity, for we can bring comfort to the sorrow-stricken, we can teach patience and carry peace to those whose lives are lived under the hardest conditions of suffering.

Christ came into the world and lived under the ordinary conditions of human life; though He was sinless, He lived His life in the like-

ness of sinful flesh (for it is sin, and not Christ, that has brought pain and sorrow into God's world); He has become Himself the Head of our race, our forerunner, and therefore He willed to live His life under those conditions of suffering which are common to man. And He trod this path of woe, in order that He might show us what suffering could become; that He might teach us this great truth, that if God has allowed pain and sorrow to come into the world, it is because He foresaw from all eternity how to turn them from a curse into a blessing. He came forth from His Father's bosom, and assumed our humanity, and lived our life and died our death, in order to show us what suffering may be to men when it is borne aright.

And, first of all, as the Representative of a sin-stricken race, He walked along the path of suffering in the spirit of contrition. He knew the sins of the race with which He was identified, in all their vast extent, in all their perplexing minuteness; He saw the sin of mankind as none but He had ever seen it, for

He saw it not only with the eyes of perfect manhood but with His human mind illuminated by the perfect light of God. He grieved for sin as no human heart has ever grieved for it, for He was One with the Father in His sorrow for sin, the sin which in deep mystery He bore. He, in His sacred will, gave Himself up to conformity with the righteous will of God, which reveals Him as being what He is in truth, the loving Father of sinners, but the stern, unsparing Foe to sin. And so, in His own inner spirit, He gave Himself to drain to its very dregs that chalice of suffering which is God's penance for sin; and as He trod this path in the power of contrition, He merited for sinners the salvation of God.

Again, He trod the way of suffering as the path of perfection—the path, that is, by which He as Man was to attain His own predestined perfection as the First and Chiefest of the creatures of God; for in Christ the Eternal Son taking into Himself a creaturely nature, deigned to live the creaturely life, and thus revealed to us what the perfection of a created nature is. But

He only reached to the full expression of this creaturely ideal through the path of suffering. The ideal of the Christ, as we have learnt to look upon it with eyes of admiration, is an ideal in which all varying beauties of character find full development and harmonious expression. Of all other characters it must be said that they only catch one ray of creaturely beauty and express it. One saint is celebrated for his penitence, another for his zeal, another for illuminated reason, another for courageous endurance; but in Christ all possible beauties meet and blend together to make one splendid whole: "Mercy and truth," in Him, "have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" active and passive virtues are found gathered up into one in Christ. The mystic Oriental and the active Western mind each finds in Christ his own ideal realised, but blended with an ideal that he had thought to be antagonistic. How has all this beauty been drawn out but by the discipline of suffering? Where could His passive virtues have found expression but

under the discipline of the Cross? How could we have seen His capacity for meekness and patience and endurance and long-suffering and the sweet tenderness of His human affection, had these graces not been exhibited on Calvary? Without this suffering the passive virtues must have remained undeveloped capacities in the Christ; but through the discipline of pain and sorrow they become manifested beauties in His character. And if this is true of the passive virtues, it is equally true of those which we call active. Let us take one alone as an instance, and consider where it is that the courage of the Incarnate finds its fullest development and expression. Surely we recognise at once that it was only fully manifested in the hours of His bitter Passion, by His courageous endurance of suffering and His brave facing of His foes. Christ was made perfect through suffering; not as though He could pass from imperfection to perfection, but because He passed onwards through it, to a perfect expression and realisation of all the possible beauties of human

character. He was always perfect essentially, but His perfection was only fully drawn out and expressed, by the discipline of His suffering life and His suffering death.

And once more. Christ trod the way of the Cross as the way of power. We are distinctly told by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews that the power of our Lord's influence over men lies in the fact that He lived His life under the conditions in which they lived theirs, so that He can look at mankind, not with pity, that is the feeling of the greater to the inferior, but with the sympathy that fills the heart of brother looking upon brother suffering a kindred woe. "We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, but without sin; let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace." It was by living His life under those same conditions of suffering which are our appointed lot, that Christ attained to that power of sympathy, which is the secret of His influence over suffering men and women.

Christ therefore came down from Heaven to teach us what suffering is meant to be, for what it was to Him is what it is to become to us—the path of contrition, of perfection, of power.

We are to live our suffering life as being the God-assigned way of contrition. Christ suffered for the sins of others, and as He bore the sins of mankind in the spirit of contrition He merited for mankind salvation. *We* tread the path of suffering as the way of personal contrition for our own sins, therefore our suffering cannot be meritorious but corrective; and because it is corrective, it is remedial and liberating: "My son, be not weary of the correction of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." How wondrous is this corrective power of suffering in the purgatory of daily life! How many careless minds are brought to think, how many stubborn wills are converted unto God by the stern discipline of suffering and sorrow!

And if it be true that suffering leads at times to conversion, how much more clearly can we see that that, which mars the beauty of character in God's children, is gradually wrought out of them by the corrective discipline to which He leads them in the greatness of His love.

But suffering is not only corrective, it is educative; it develops, it perfects. Sometimes, as we go through life, we come across those who are beautiful with the most attractive of all beauty; the beauty of those who have sorrowed deeply; we see in them a wondrous tenderness, a deep settled peace. Their very countenance is transfigured by the quiet chastened joy that wins all hearts; yet, if we look closely, we can always see beneath that placid surface the deep and furrowed lines which tell us how they have suffered. I believe indeed that there is a beauty of Christian character which can only be developed by great suffering or great sorrow. Hence it is that God, in His great love, leads us each in turn to suffer, in order that all the inner

capacities of our character may be developed by His discipline, and that, like Christ Himself, through the power of the Blessed Spirit, we may be made "perfect through suffering."

And, in the third place, suffering is the school of influence. Let us remember those beautiful words of St. Paul in 2 Cor. i. 3-6: it is good to read them often, and to pray over them, especially when we are perplexed at the sufferings around us, or are called to deep sorrow ourselves. St. Paul is giving utterance to a thanksgiving for the comfort wherewith God comforts His people in all their tribulations; and what does he tell them is the purpose of it all? That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. What does this world of God need, this poor sorrow-stricken, sin-stricken world? Does it not need brothers and sisters of consolation? And where can these be trained but in the school for suffering? It is for this reason that God leads His elect to their bitter

experiences that He may comfort them in all their tribulations, and then send them out, God-taught, from the school of sorrow, to be true brothers and sisters of mercy to suffering ones around. As with Jesus so with us; God causes many to undergo the discipline of grief, in order that they may be thus trained to fulfil life's highest ministry, and become paracletes or comforters to others. So suffering becomes to them the path of power.

But it may be objected, suffering has not always this beneficial effect, it is sometimes harmful. Under suffering, faith breaks down and men rise in mental rebellion against God's will; hearts that were once large-hearted and tender became narrow, and characters that were pleasing became querulous; under suffering, wills are sometimes hardened into obstinate rebellion, and a despairing gloom settles over the spirit. Suffering does not always elevate and purify. Yes, it is too true; but that is because they with whom God deals in the school of suffering are not stocks and stones, but men and women, and the

effect of suffering depends upon the posture of their will under its discipline. They who, with conformity of will, accept the sorrow; who, knowing the rod and Who has appointed it, bow down beneath it in humble submission —*they* will ever find sorrow to be the school of peace and suffering the school of sanctity. But they who refuse to endure the Divine discipline with patience, who rise in rebellion through lack of conformity of will, must always deteriorate under a discipline which came to them, however, not for the deterioration of character, but for its perfection.

How then are we so to co-operate with God that we may attain, through suffering, those blessed results He intends it to produce? The answer is plain: we must endure with patience. That is a remarkable expression in the Revelation of St. John, which speaks "of the patience of the saints." One saint differs from another saint in his conspicuous virtues; but there is one virtue which each possesses, without which, indeed, none could have grown up into saintly beauty of

character; and that is the virtue of patience. St. James, again, in his Epistle, teaches us that patience and perfection are essentially connected together: "Let patience have her perfect work in you, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Patiently endure, then, God-sent discipline, and you will be perfected by it; but without patience it will never be to you a discipline of peace or of sanctity. But how alone can this patience become ours? "Through the eternal Spirit." Patience is formed within us by the indwelling Spirit of the Living God; it is an utterly supernatural thing. Natural determination must break down eventually under the trials of life; it is only supernatural patience which can enable us to hold on our way day after day, whilst we grow ever stronger and stronger.

This spirit of patience is formed in us, by the Holy Ghost, in many ways. First of all, He leads God's children to live in the simple recognition of the Fatherhood of God; or, to put this truth in other words, in the abiding

consciousness of sonship. If you take St. John's Gospel, which has been called the history of the inner life of Jesus Christ, you will not fail to remark the constant reiteration of the words, "The Father," "My Father," as used by our Lord ; they show us Him in His assumed humanity, as living in the consciousness that in that human nature taken into union with His Divine Personality He is still the Son of God. He lives His life on earth in the constant recognition of the Fatherhood of God.

So it must be with us. I know nothing that underlies true patience, but the knowledge of the relationship existing between myself and God. I am God's son; He loves me with a Father's love; He trains me with a Father's wisdom ; He demands from me the absolute trust and the abandonment of a child; and I am able to go through life, patiently enduring all its sufferings, for the bitter chalice is ever lifted to my lips by my Father's hands, and "the cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?"

Patience is acquired, in the next place, by the conviction that my Father, as He leads me to suffer, will always give me the grace I need in order to bear His discipline, if only I will live, moment by moment, looking to Him, my eyes fixed upon His face, my ear attentive to His voice, my will surrendered to His will.

Look how beautifully this spirit of dependence comes out in the life of Christ, "As I hear, I speak." He, that wondrous One, God manifest in the Flesh, comes into the world to be the Divine Messenger, and therefore He lives the life of a patient listener, always listening to God's voice, always hearing, as He is continually speaking. Or again, "The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." In those words we have the recognition of the true relationship existing between our Lord in His assumed humanity and God. All those wondrous works which He did, so that all men marvelled at Him, He recognised simply as

being done by Him, in His human nature, as the instrument of God. He waited patiently upon God: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do." It is a position of absolute dependence upon the will of Him who sent Him, and that not only in the doing of life's work, but in the bearing of that life's awful sufferings.

And once more, patience is gained by the consciousness of the abiding sympathy of Christ. He knows what I am going through by His own experience; He knows how strong the temptation is to discouragement; He knows how fiercely I am tempted to draw back. Did He not Himself undergo the conflict in the wilderness and agony in Gethsemane? "He knoweth whereof I am made." Yes, and He understands the difference of conditions under which He faced His sufferings, and I have to face mine; for He was different from me in this, that He was without sin, and I have all the weakness of a sinful nature. And so it comes to pass that, as I go on my way, my very murmurings

come up into His ears as prayers, and He is patient with me in my slow correspondence to His grace; He is patient with me even when I rebel. Sometimes people say, in a fit of despair, that they are going to give up trying; and we say to them confidently, "Christ will not give you up." Again and again people give up their prayers, and their communions, give up everything; and, after a few weeks or months, they once more come back and begin afresh. Why is it? "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "I hate putting away, saith the Lord." So the thought grows upon the soul, slowly learnt in the painful experience of life, how splendid is the constancy of Christ's love, how kindly His judgment, how tender His leading, how effectual His help. And as we throw ourselves upon Him in a confidence that grows stronger day by day, as we experience His sweet dealings with us, patience becomes formed within our heart—the patience that can endure.

And so, let us learn beneath the foot of the

Cross this lesson of Christian life; to follow the Cross-bearing Lord along the way of sorrows. "Take up thy Cross and follow Me." Do not lead the self-led life, lead the Christ-led life; do not turn aside from the path that seems rough in the thought that you cannot bear its suffering; for He who leads you there will give you power to tread it; the rough path will become smooth beneath your feet, and the way of suffering will be to you a path of joy.

Give yourself up wholly to the direction of Jesus in the power of His Spirit; fret not against the outward circumstances of life. If pain be sent, bear it; if heart-breaking sorrow renders your home dark and dreary, bear it; if He calls you to hard conditions of spiritual life—to conditions so hard that there bursts from your lips the cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"—still bear it, in utter abandonment to His love. Though the surroundings of life are painful and trying, if you are wise you will not pray to Him to make them easy; you will not ask

Him to take you down from your cross. Ask Him rather to give you power to submit to His will under these hard conditions, and to keep you under His sharp discipline, until His loving purpose has been fulfilled in your soul. Give yourself up to Christ, trust Him to give you the gift of patience through the power of the Spirit. Then you shall learn by experience to know that the path of contrition is the path of peace, that the path of suffering is the path of education, that the path of woe is the path of power; until at length He calls you hence to that fair Land where, amidst our many thanksgivings, we shall thank Him most of all for the blessed discipline of life's suffering and sorrow, and for that spirit of patience whereby He enabled us to submit ourselves to His discipline, and through that discipline to reach forward to the full enjoyment of His Love.

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